

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask that S. 1766 be read for a second time, and then I would object at this time to any further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill for the second time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1766) to provide for the energy security of the Nation, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Wyoming.

SENIORS MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2001

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I rise today to make a few comments on a bill introduced earlier this week and about which I have not had a chance to talk. I introduced it along with Senator LINCOLN of Arkansas. It is called the Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2001.

I am very happy to have had an opportunity to introduce this bill. It is important legislation, particularly for seniors living in rural areas. The bill is designed to provide more opportunities for seniors under Medicare to have professional assistance in areas where often there are shortages of providers, and this is designed to help that situation.

It permits mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists to bill Medicare for their services, and it pays them at the rate of clinical social workers.

It is particularly important in rural States, such as my State of Wyoming, where often there is a shortage of mental health providers, and so it requires a good deal of travel. On the other hand, there are trained social workers who are prepared to provide these services if they have an opportunity to do

it under the Medicare Program. That is what this bill does.

Currently, there are Medicare limitations on the types of mental health providers. Rural seniors are often forced to travel a good distance to take advantage of those services. Mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists are often the only mental health providers in a community. They have the same training and education as clinical social workers. Social workers have been recognized by Medicare for 10 years.

Seniors, of course, do have higher rates of suicide and depression than other populations. Therefore, it is very evident that this change is needed. We need to recognize the qualifications of these providers and ensure that seniors do have access to them.

The majority of Wyoming communities are mental health professional shortage areas and probably will continue to be that way for some time. Because Medicare recognizes a limited number of mental health providers, Wyoming seniors have access to 537 providers, 247 social workers, and 121 psychiatrists.

This bill will double the number of available Medicare mental health providers. Seventy-five percent of 518 national designated mental health professional shortage areas are in rural areas. Again, not a surprise.

One-fifth of rural counties have no mental health services of any kind.

Frontier counties, of course, as they are designated in terms of mental health providers, are in even more dire straits.

Ninety-five percent do not have psychiatrists, 68 percent do not have psychologists, and 78 percent do not have social workers.

I am proud to be an author of this bill, along with Senator LINCOLN. I hope we will make some progress as soon as possible. It will perhaps not be this year, I imagine, but it will be as we move on into Medicare reform, which I think we will certainly undertake next year.

DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I want to make a comment or two about the subject we are going to debate this morning. It seems to me certainly there is nothing more important for us to undertake than the matter of appropriations for defense. I think the Senate needs to be responsive to the President's request for defense funding in not adding non-defense spending to this Defense appropriations bill.

Our men and women in the military are overseas defending this country, and we must support them. This appropriations bill, as other appropriations bills, obviously should have been passed back in August or September, the end of the fiscal year. We have gone 2 months now without increasing those dollars. So I hope we can move forward, and I hope we do not hold this bill hos-

tage to some kind of fairly unrelated spending. We ought to get right to it and do what the President has asked us to do.

He has indicated what we did in the \$40 billion in September is available. He has indicated when they need more money, whether it be for defense or domestic terrorism, he will request more money. So I certainly hope we do not spend a great deal of time trying to add more dollars to Defense appropriations than what the President had asked. He has made it quite clear he intends to veto it if it is that way. I think that would be a real disadvantage to us all and to the people we are intending to assist.

I look forward to being able to deal with that, to come up with something we can pass through the Senate and the House, get to the President, and that we can support the President in this area of defense. I think we find ourselves sometimes talking about spending money when there is not a plan yet to use it. Domestic security is one of those things. We have seen meetings where they are working together and Governor Ridge has said when we get the plan we will ask for the money that is necessary if it is not now in the \$20 billion. So to go ahead and sort of put the money out there before those who are managing the program have had an opportunity to decide how that money can best be used is a mistake. I hope we do not do that.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. JOHNSON. I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUPPORT THE ENERGY BILL AND THE RENEWABLE FUELS STANDARD

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the comprehensive energy bill that is being introduced today.

As we all know, there has been a great deal of discussion this year about the nation's energy situation. The increasing volatility in gasoline and diesel prices and the growing tension in the world from the terrorist attacks have affected all of us. There is a clear need for energy policies that ensure long term planning, homeland security, fuel diversity and a focus on new technologies.

To this end, I am very pleased that a comprehensive energy bill has been introduced in the Senate by my South Dakota colleague, Senator TOM